

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-22 are pending. Claims 6-18, 21 and 22 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Applicants appreciate the Office Action's indication that Claim 5 contains allowable subject matter.

The Office Action rejects Claims 1-4, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Publication No. 2004/0036936 to Nakajima et al. in view of U.S. Publication No. 2003/0156310 to Suzuki et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 103(c)(1), subject matter developed by another person which qualifies as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) should not preclude patentability under 35 U.S.C. § 103 where the subject matter and the claimed invention were, at the time the claimed invention was made, owned by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person.

In accordance with the attached Statement of Common Ownership, Nakajima et al., Suzuki et al. and the instant application were, at the time of the invention of this application, commonly owned by, or subject to an obligation of assignment to, Ricoh Company Ltd. Thus, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

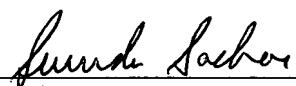
Respectfully submitted,

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